2004/July PAUL BAJORIA – Publishing News

Basically it's second time lucky for debut author and Radio 4 producer/writer Paul Bajoria. *The Printer's Devil*, which Simon and Schuster publish in October, was originally written in the mid 80s, after he'd left the University of Toronto with an MA in English, and at a time, he says "…when I was re-visiting books by Leon Garfield and Joan Aiken". But back then no one was interested in historical novels and the manuscript was put away in a drawer to gather dust.

   Which is where it would have stayed but for a chance conversation Bajoria had with his nine year-old niece, almost 20 years later, about what children her age wanted to read. Things had changed somewhat, he gathered, which meant the time might be right to have another go. It turned out it was, because, as luck would have it, publishing does seem to be in the middle of a paradigm shift from fantasy to history.

   After some fairly serious revision, which has turned his story into a very sharp and pacey piece of work, Bajoria sent it to Christopher Little. "I knew he handled JK Rowling and as I was planning a campaign of sending it to agent after agent I thought, why not start at the top?" he says. "Christopher was the first agent I sent it to and what you see now is pretty close to what he received." The manuscript was quickly snapped up by Simon & Schuster's Venetia Gosling.

   The story, a complex thriller set amongst the stew of colourful – and sometimes dangerous – inhabitants, vibrant streets and noxious alleyways of early 19th century London, centres on Mog Winter, the eponymous printer's devil, and the mystery of *The Sun of Calcutta*, a ship recently berthed at the East India docks. There is a sequel already being written, provisionally titled *The God of Mischief*, so does this mean Bajoria is saying goodbye to the Beeb? "I have no plans to give up the day job at the moment – radio is very stimulating and I do think myself lucky to have one of the best jobs in the BBC," he says, "but if the writing took off I'd consider it."